

TOM COLE
4TH DISTRICT, OKLAHOMA

DEPUTY WHIP

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
CHAIRMAN



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

February 24, 2025

PLEASE REPLY TO:

- 2207 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6165
- 3219 ROCK CREEK RD
SUITE 125
NORMAN, OK 73072
(405) 329-6500
- 711 SW D AVENUE
SUITE 201
LAWTON, OK 73501
(580) 357-2131
- SUGG CLINIC OFFICE BUILDING
100 EAST 13TH STREET, SUITE 213
ADA, OK 74820
(580) 436-5375

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Vought,

As a member of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma, Co-Chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus, and longest serving Native American in the House of Representatives, I would like to know how actions being taken and future actions planned to be taken are impacting tribal nations.

Tribal nations are and have always been sovereign governments that have political, government-to-government relationships with the United States, as supported and affirmed several times in the courts. They are not a racial group and, as such, should not be a part of any executive orders or agency actions targeting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). Funding or programs that provide for tribal nations are not “preferences” or “race-based,” but rather deliver certain obligations to tribal communities.

In addition, the federal government has a legally binding trust responsibility to tribal nations to protect and support Native American tribes and their citizens. The United States fulfills these trust and treaty obligations both through the direct delivery of tribal programs and services and the provision of federal funding to tribal nations to provide services to their own communities. Services include law enforcement, healthcare, education, housing, water, economic development, nutrition assistance, and many others.

Some agencies are rightfully exempting funding and the workforce that serve tribal nations from executive orders or agency actions. I would encourage the administration and all agencies to continue these exemptions and engage in tribal consultation ahead of decision-makings as part of the United States’ duty to respect the government-to-government relationship with tribal nations.

I appreciate your attention this matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom Cole". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Tom Cole
Member of Congress

CC: Secretary Rubio, Secretary Bessent, Secretary Hegseth, Attorney General Bondi, Secretary Burgum, Secretary Rollins, Secretary Lutnick, Acting Secretary Micone, Secretary Kennedy, Administrator Zeldin, Secretary Turner, Secretary Duffy, Secretary Wright, Acting Secretary Carter, Secretary Collins, Secretary Noem, Administrator Loeffler.